

Community Comment
December 6, 2013
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Giving & the Economy

Baby, it's cold outside. It seems winter snuck up on us when we weren't looking. The combination of low rainfall and the great weather we had over Thanksgiving made it still feel like fall. Wednesday night, my wife was out covering a few plants that we didn't want to freeze. I hope you all had a great Thanksgiving with family and friends around. Many of us have plenty to be thankful for and as we enter the holidays we should remember many can not say the same. There are toy drives and food drives. There is a coats for the cold program. It's certainly a time to be aware of those less fortunate than ourselves and to do what we can in the best way you see fit. Giving is a very personal opportunity and it is best left at that. It can be part of certain religious activities or quite secular in motivation. Humboldt County is about as good a community as there is for helping our less fortunate neighbors.

There has been a lot of airtime given to the roll out of the new health care law. I've talked to a lot of tech savvy friends who think the issues that surfaced with the federal web site are about par for the course. I've also talked to a half a dozen people from various political viewpoints who were able to get a better plan than they had before at the same or less cost in about 20 minutes. I don't need the new marketplace of private insurance companies but it seems to be working for the better. My problem with the new health care law is that we didn't do enough to get everyone covered. We also haven't tried to do anything about the cost of health care practice. There are three hundred million of us. That's a big pool. That's a lot of consumers. Acting as one big group should bring costs down. It works in other industries. The fact is we are not a small country with remote outposts and no easy connection. Today, we are mostly urban, with more in common than not and enjoy instant communication abilities. We simply are not the 1950's, and we are not going back.

The economy continues to sputter back to life. Our divided politics is doing us no favor in improving things. But mostly, the attack on the middle class is the biggest problem and it makes no sense to me. Most Americans work for a living. But it seems we have gone out of our way to limit critical industries and good job opportunities. Wages have been stagnant for decades. The middle class is shrinking, the rich are getting richer, and the working poor and poor are growing in numbers. Unions used to look out for worker rights and provide a voice for those that have none as individuals. We have attacked unions in the private sector and the public arena. Ask yourself who benefits from keeping wages down and outsourcing job opportunities. It is certainly not the American middle class.

We need to have a conversation about this stuff without the blinders of politics and political labels getting in the way. We have real work to get done and we need to do it together. I want my grandchildren to have more and better opportunities than I had. But we can't do it the mold of the 60's or 80's. We need to work within the realities of the present and the known future. Every generation has had a challenge, this is ours.

As we approach a new year, I look forward to a new spirit of cooperation. We should do this like our lives depend on it. They do.

This has been Sam pennisi for community comment.